

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | PAGE # |
|---|---------------|
| COURSE INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| COURSE COMPETENCIES | 2 - 3 |
| EXAMPLES OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE IN UTAH STATE GOVERNMENT | 4 - 6 |
| INTRODUCTION TO WORKPLACE VIOLENCE | |
| What is workplace violence? | 8 |
| How big is this problem? | 9 |
| Why should you be concerned? | 10 |
| THE IMPACT OF VIOLENCE | |
| Impact on the victim. | 12 |
| Violence impacts more than just the victim | 13 |
| Impact on the workplace | 14 |
| Concerns that employers share | 15 |
| UNDERSTANDING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE | |
| Workplace violence victim | 17 |
| Types of violence | 18 |
| How prevalent is workplace violence? | 19 |
| Utah statistics | 20 |
| Workplace factors | 21 |
| Workplace factors - continued | 22 |
| Domestic and other factors | 23 |
| Societal factors | 24 |
| Are some employees at greater risk than others? | 25 |
| COMPONENTS OF VIOLENCE | |
| Common traits of the perpetrator | 27 |
| Pattern of escalation | 28 |
| Catalysts for escalation | 29 |
| Recognizing potential problems (warning signs) | 30 |
| Warning signs | 31 |
| More warning signs | 32 |
| Common mistakes | 33 |
| WHAT CAN I DO? | |
| You are an essential part of the solution | 35 |
| When and how to respond | 36 |
| When and how to respond - continued | 37 |
| Facing aggression | 38 |
| In the face of danger | 39 |
| In the face of danger - continued | 40 |
| After the incident | 41 |
| PREVENTION STRATEGIES | |
| Prevention | 43 |
| Office layout | 44 |
| Office layout - another view | 45 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 46 |
| APPENDICES | 48 - 55 |
| INCIDENT GUIDE | 56-63 |
| FINAL EXAM | 64-67 |

1

COURSE INTRODUCTION

Each year throughout the country, hundreds of individuals are injured or killed due to workplace violence. In Utah, we have not escaped this problem.

This training program is designed to serve as an introduction to workplace violence prevention. Violence can occur among co-workers, customers, angry family members, or others who act out their aggression in the workplace. An incident of violence victimizes those involved as well as those who are indirect victims (e.g., family). *Workplace violence impacts everyone!*

Throughout this training, you will be asked to contemplate your own workplace. You are urged to take this training seriously. Learn the warning signs. Understand your responsibility to yourself, your co-workers, and your customers. Acknowledge the potential for risk, and evaluate your immediate work surroundings accordingly. Understanding will help you avoid or improve your ability to cope with an incident of violence.

2

COURSE COMPETENCIES

Upon successful completion of this course, the employee should understand:

Introduction to Workplace Violence Prevention

- How workplace violence is defined
- The scope of the problem of workplace violence
- Why all employees should be concerned about workplace violence

The Impact of Violence

- How violence impacts the victim
- How others are impacted by an act of violence
- Costs to the agency are great
- Ultimately, the costs impact all employees

Workplace Violence

- Who a victim is
- Types and prevalence of violence in the workplace
- Factors that contribute to the problem of workplace violence
- Why some employees are at greater risk than others

Components of Violence

- Traits of the perpetrator
- How violence escalates, and what factors act as catalysts
- What the common warning signs are and how to recognize them
- Common mistakes employees make

What Can I Do?

- Employees are a part of the solution
- When and how to respond to violence
- How to handle aggression
- What to do when faced with imminent or occurring danger
- What to do after the incident

Prevention Strategies

- Basics of preventing workplace violence
- Office layout options for protection
- How to use the incident guide

Policies and Procedures

- State and agency policies and procedures

Upon successful completion of this course, the employee should understand:

Developing A Violence Prevention Program

- The importance of developing a policy regarding workplace violence
- What a crisis management team is, and who the potential members are
- What a trauma team is, and how to mobilize it

Workplace Analysis

- Important issues to address when analyzing the workplace environment
- Key security issues
- Factors in office layout that contribute to safety during a violent incident

Prevention Strategies

- The importance of training
- Hiring and disciplinary practices that may help reduce violent incidents
- The importance of employee counseling alternatives

Observation and Intervention

- Employee observation practices
- How and when to intervene

The Incident Guide

- The purpose and use of the incident guide

After the Incident

- Critical things to do after a violent incident
- How to deal with the media
- Coping with employee concerns
- Restoring the workplace to normal operation

Policy Training

- The specific agency policies regarding workplace violence

3

EXAMPLES OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE IN UTAH STATE GOVERNMENT

The following are examples of the types of workplace violence that have been or are being experienced by employees of the State of Utah:

1. A child welfare worker removed the children from a home because of neglect and other problems. The next day the children's mother showed up at the local office and pulled a 44 magnum pistol from her purse, pointed it at the manager of the office and demanded that the children be returned to her.
2. An employment counselor in a rural area was stalked for over a month by an individual who had been denied a benefit to which he felt entitled. The stalking involved following the employee to and from work, making phone calls to her at all hours of the day or night and other similar activities. The situation ceased only after a police officer unofficially spoke with the stalker and told him to stop. There was not enough evidence to justify the filing of a formal complaint. (This occurred before the current Stalking Bill was passed.)
3. A female employee, who was employed by the same agency as her husband, came to his work location with a loaded gun and sought him out. She had just found out that he had been involved in an extramarital affair. When she was stopped by security and calmed down she claimed that she only intended to scare him. No charges were filed in the case and it is believed that the two are still married.
4. Two employees who work in an agency are neighbors. One employee reported the other employee to the city zoning board because he was keeping goats on property that was not zoned for livestock. The city ordered the individual to get rid of the goats and fined him for violating a city ordinance. The employee, who had been fined, sought out the other employee and physically assaulted him on the worksite. (The assaultive employee was fired.)
5. The estranged husband of an employee came to her worksite and demanded to see her. He was clearly agitated. The female employee left the work area and walked into a stairwell to talk with him. He pulled a gun, and shot and killed the employee.
6. A student at a college was involved in an administrative hearing to determine if he would be expelled from school for harassing a female student. At one point in the hearing, he pulled a gun from his briefcase and tried to shoot her. He was killed by a police officer who was in the hearing to provide security, only after the student wounded two individuals, including the state's attorney.
7. Unarmed security officers in a youth detention center were severely beaten by juvenile offenders. The individuals were so severely beaten that they were placed on permanent disability by the Workers Compensation Fund.

8. When told that the individual he had come to see at a state office was not available, an agency client threw a one inch thick file of papers at the receptionist. The client stated that the next time he came to the office, he would bring his gun. The individual did not have an appointment and had never contacted the agency previously.
9. A clearly intoxicated individual became belligerent and threatened a clerk at a liquor store because the clerk would not sell him any alcohol (Dram Shop Act requirements). The individual left only after the manager of the store threatened him with a baseball bat.
10. A former employee, who had been fired from an agency, confronted the human resource employee in the parking lot of a bank. The HR employee had acted as management's representative in the administrative hearing. The former employee jumped in front of the HR employee's vehicle making the employee stop suddenly. He then approached the employee's window and stated, "I am going to get you. I will make you pay no matter how long it takes." The disgruntled former employee had been fired for insubordination and for making threats against other staff. The HR employee had previously been advised by other staff in the agency to get a concealed weapons permit and to start packing a gun because the ex-employee was known to be unstable and violent.
11. An individual who was on state welfare made threats to a number of people that she would harm an employee who years ago had denied her a benefit that the client thought she was due. It was discovered that the client had a mental problem and had stopped taking her medication for this condition. She had also been abusing both alcohol and controlled substances. The agency adopted special security and safety measures to protect the employee, but did not change any of its operations in the office.
12. A brake line on a state van, used by employees of an agency that provides monetary assistance to clients, was severed, allegedly by a person or persons unknown. The problem was discovered as the staff was traveling down Sardine Canyon. (The van was stopped safely and no one was injured.)
13. Tires of vehicles parked in an employees-only parking area were punctured, and the sides of the vehicles were "keyed" (A key is scraped along the side of the vehicle, making a deep scratch in the paint.) This occurred after a meeting in which individuals from a recently closed business were told that their benefits were limited.
14. Employees of an agency received an official looking legal notice to appear at a "Peoples Court for the Sovereign Kingdom of (name withheld), John Doe prophet and king, to be tried for crimes against God and the people." They were told that if they failed to appear they would have liens placed against their personal property. They did not appear and nothing happened. The leader of the group is a well known right-wing activist. (In other states, right-wing groups have used the liens as a harassment method.)
15. An individual filed a lawsuit against the governor and other officials for violation of his "Constitutional and God-given rights." He demanded sixty-million dollars. When he was told that his claim had been filed illegally and that he had not stated a proper claim, he threatened the staff of the agency that processes lawsuits against the state. He further stated that when he returned he would bring his gun and his friends.

16. An individual appeared at a rural fish and game office and demanded to purchase a hunting permit for an area of the state. When he was told that all of the permits for that area had been sold, he became irate. After swearing at the staff, he stated, "I will be back at closing time with my friends and my gun and we will settle this." After spending the afternoon at the bar he, returned to the office with his hunting rifle and some of his drunken friends. The officer had contacted local law enforcement. They were ready for the confrontation.

17. An employee in a state building returned to his vehicle after work to find a bullet hole in the window and a bullet embedded in the interior paneling. (It is unknown if the employee's vehicle was the target, or if the bullet was from a gun used by a gang member who was shooting at a rival gang.) The office is located in an area known for gang problems and sales of illegal drugs.

18. An individual entered a state medical clinic and threatened the staff with a knife. He threatened to cut someone if they did not give him all of the controlled substances that they had on hand. (The clinic does not dispense any controlled substances.) After one of the staff calmed him down and explained that they didn't have any drugs, he walked out and disappeared. (The staff member did a great job of dealing with an individual who appeared to be mentally ill and strung out on drugs. The staff member who dealt with the individual had worked for a number of years in the emergency ward of a large metropolitan hospital and had handled similar cases in the past.)

19. A bomb threat was phoned into the capitol operator during the legislative session. All staff and visitors left both the State Office Building and the State Capitol and waited in the cold while bomb sniffing dogs searched all of the areas in both buildings. No bomb was found.

20. An employee of an agency was terminated for a variety of misconduct and other inappropriate behavior issues. The employee filed a lawsuit against her former employer and other employees. When the claim did not go as she wanted, the employee made a variety of threats against other employees, her own attorney, and the Federal Court. In one situation, she was escorted from the court in handcuffs by the Federal Marshals. She has continued to make threats against anyone who she feels is opposed to her.

21. A Human Resource manager returned to her car after work and discovered that the antenna had been broken off and the license plate cover kicked in. She had just disciplined an employee. No one was identified as the culprit in the incident.

Conclusion

The examples listed above are only a small sample of the types and variety of workplace violence incidents that are occurring on a regular basis in state government. By its nature government must make decisions that make some people happy and others unhappy. Employees are being sworn at, cursed and spit upon on a regular basis. Often the individuals who receive the brunt of this behavior are those least able to do anything about it. They are the receptionists and other clerical staff who first greet the public. If more examples are needed, simply talk to any long-term employee in any agency that deals with the public.

INTRODUCTION TO WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

4

What is workplace violence?

DEFINITION OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE:

Workplace violence consists of any act of physical, verbal or written aggression against an individual in the workplace. Done with the purpose of intimidation or threat, workplace violence may also involve destruction or abuse of property.

Although behavior is difficult to predict, the best predictor of workplace violence is a history of violence.

For the purpose of this course, workplace violence will be defined as any situation or incident that:

1. Threatens any person's safety on the job.
2. Negatively impacts any employee's physical, emotional or psychological well being.
3. Causes damage to state property, or to an employee's property while at work.

Application:

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5 How big is this problem?

Compared to other countries around the globe, the United States is a violent country. It is, in fact, the most violent nation in the western world. Potentially, anyone could become involved in workplace violence. Consider these facts:

Each year, almost one million people become victims of violent crime while at work.

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health - (NIOSH), homicide in the workplace is the fastest growing form of murder (the rate has doubled in the last 10 years). Each week, an average of twenty people are murdered and 18,000 are assaulted while working or on duty in the United States.

Five percent of women victimized at work were attacked by someone they knew well compared to one percent of men. (Bachman, 1994)

According to a major NIOSH study of U.S. workers, 12% of all deaths from injury in the workplace resulted from homicides. Homicide was the leading cause of death from occupational injuries for women.

In 1995, according to Occupational Safety & Health administration (OSHA), 160,000 people were physically assaulted in the workplace.

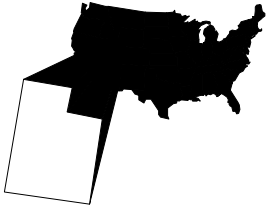
Application:

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Why should you be concerned?

This is a problem that impacts the State of Utah. It impacts you and your co-workers. Workplace violence is real, and it is growing. However, trained, proactive employees make a difference.



Former Center for Disease Control (CDC) Director and new Surgeon General David Satcher, M.D. said, “Violence in the workplace is a significant public health problem *but one that can be addressed by recognizing the factors that put employees at risk and taking appropriate preventive actions.*” (italics added)

Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Donna E. Shalala said, “We, as a society, cannot afford to tolerate violence against working men and women. As we pursue the fundamental steps to reduce the level of violence in society in general, we also must take strategic steps to protect Americans from violence on the job.”

From the sublime to the ridiculous is but a step.
– Napoleon Bonaparte

The reason for providing this type of training is part of the good news. Much of the trauma that results in the workplace due to violence is *preventable*. When you complete this course, you will have skills to become part of the solution.

Application:

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THE IMPACT OF VIOLENCE

7 Impact on the victim

The victim who experiences the violence first hand experiences more than what is immediately apparent. Obviously, the physical effects resulting from any attack (from shouting to homicide) are understood.

There are two types of violence: commercial robbery, and noncommercial violence (such as that committed by a disgruntled employee).

What about the effects that are not so obvious? Those that are not observable on the outside are usually more devastating, and may require a longer recovery period.

A workforce violence study conducted by Northwestern National Life Insurance yielded the following results (600 full-time U.S. workers surveyed):

| | <u>EFFECT ON WORKER</u> | <u>ATTACK</u> | <u>THREAT</u> |
|--|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Affected psychologically | 79% | 77% |
| | Disrupted work life | 40% | 36% |
| <i>Loss of productivity and production are further problems associated with incidents of violence.</i> | Physically injured or sick | 28% | 13% |
| | No negative effect | 15% | 19% |

Emotional problems resulting from violence include: incidents of self-doubt, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), fear, loss of sleep, irritability, disturbed relationships with family, friends, and co-workers, decreased ability to function at work and increased absenteeism (with possible loss of wages).

Application:

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8 Violence impacts more than just the victim . . .

Every act of violence in the workplace affects more than just the victim of the incident. Consider the following:

Those who witness the incident may be potential victims as well. If not physically harmed, they may suffer emotional or psychological trauma from what they witnessed.

Family members and friends of the victim who have a personal relationship with the victim may suffer.

Customers who witness the incident may be affected. This could result in a disruption of services and possible litigation.

The agency may suffer monetarily, legally and through a discredited reputation. Such incidents often become fodder for media coverage. The negative publicity not only impacts the agency, it can also impact the employees because of the expenses resulting from the incident.

The potential consequences of a single act of violence may be traumatic, expensive and difficult to recover from. Not all incidents are traumatic, however. A simple “shouting match” may not traumatize the employees, but such incidents can and do escalate. At the very least, those who witness it are impacted in productivity, emotional reactions, desensitization and/or feelings of respect or trust. The effects may be cumulative.

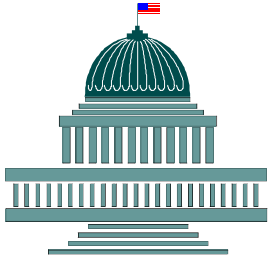
*There can be hope only
for a society which acts
as one big family, and
not many separate
ones. – Anwar al-Sadat*

Application:

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9 Impact on the workplace

In addition to the effects of violence on the victim, the organization suffers as well. In fact, the impact of violence on an agency/employer can be devastating and have long-term consequences.



The U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics states that assaults in the workplace cost a half million employees 1,751,000 days of work each year, at an average of 3.5 days per incident. It is estimated that these missed days of work resulted in \$55,000,000 in lost wages annually (not including days covered by sick or annual leave).

Because the cost to employers is in the billions of dollars annually, everyone should be concerned. *If these problems impact employers financially, they also impact employees and customers financially.*

To have respect for ourselves guides our morals; and to have a deference for others governs our manners.
– Laurence Sterne

The next page contains some specific examples of how employers are affected. Note that the problems impact people. *It is real, and cannot be ignored.*

Application:

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10 Concerns that employers share

Some problems that result from violent acts in the workplace may not be readily apparent to you. Consider these effects:

Losses in productivity. These include increased injuries on the job due to distraction or preoccupation, absenteeism and increased turnover.

Psychological effects. These include trauma suffered by those who witness or hear of the incident, fear, lower morale and feelings of violation and vulnerability.

Dilution and diversion of management resources. Management is forced to respond to problems rather than productivity. Legal remedies are sought. Security costs increase.

Property damage. This may be the result of theft, sabotage, vandalism or other acts of aggression.

Litigation. Law suits may be brought against an employer who is perceived to have been negligent in hiring, supervising or training employees or who failed to intervene properly. An employer's best and appropriate efforts may be brought under legal scrutiny, which results in court costs and attorney's fees.

Increased workers compensation costs due to the cost of injuries and their long term effect.

*I find the great thing in
this world is not so
much where we stand,
as in what direction we
are moving. – Oliver
Wendell Holmes*

Application:

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UNDERSTANDING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

11

Women face a greater likelihood of encountering workplace violence than men do.

Workplace violence victim: Anyone who has been injured, harmed or who has suffered in some way due to the acts of another while on the job or due to job-related factors.

DEFINITION

Victims are not only those who are the direct targets of a violent act. They may also be those who innocently witness the act. For example, someone who witnesses a verbal or physical attack on a co-worker may suffer emotionally, mentally or physically as a result of what they saw. Victims may also be the unfortunate innocent person who is just at the wrong place at the wrong time.

ACTIVITY

Before we move on, please take a moment to think of some acts of violence you may have observed in your workplace. Record your thoughts in the notes section below. Don't worry about judging the experience. Just write down some acts you have personally observed that might qualify as workplace violence.

Application:

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12 Types of violence

*Anyone can be a victim.
No one is immune.*

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health published perhaps one of the most comprehensive studies ever done on violence in the workplace in July 1996. Many of the statistics found in this course come from the NIOSH study. Their report (Current Intelligence Bulletin 57) is entitled: *Violence in the Workplace: Risk Factors and Prevention Strategies*.

Among the types of violent acts committed in the workplace, the following are the most common:



- ? Verbal threats
- ? Hitting, kicking, beating
- ? Squeezing, pinching, scratching, twisting
- ? Biting
- ? Stabbing
- ? Shooting
- ? Property damage
- ? Rape
- ? All other

These are very traumatic experiences for the victims. Almost all of the incidents listed resulted in the victims taking 3 - 30 days off of work. The violent episode impacts virtually every aspect of the victim's life. Because of the far-reaching effect on every aspect of the workplace, we cannot take this problem lightly.

Application:

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13

How prevalent is workplace violence?

The table below reflects the types of crimes most frequently committed in the workplace across the United States. The information is based upon an annual survey called the National Crime Victimization Survey. It deals primarily with assaults in the workplace.

| | <u>Type of Crime</u> | <u>Avg. Annual #</u> | |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| | | <u>Victims</u> | <u>Injuries</u> |
| <i>Abraham Lincoln was once taken to task for his attitude toward his enemies: "Why try to make friends of them? You should destroy them!" Lincoln gently replied, "Am I not destroying my enemies when I make them my friends?"</i> | Simple Assault | 615,160 | 89,572 |
| | Aggravated Assault | 264,174 | 48,180 |
| | Robbery | 79,109 | 17,904 |
| | Rape | <u>13,068</u> | <u>3,438*</u> |
| | Total | 971,517 | 159,094 |

*Injuries are those in addition to the rape

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) analyzed workplace victimizations by type of work setting, and found that 61% occurred in private companies, 30% occurred among government employees and 8 % of the victims were self-employed. (Bachman 1994).

Since government workers make up only 18% of the total workforce, they suffered a disproportionate share of attacks. It should be noted that these statistics include all local, state and federal police.

Application:

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14

Utah statistics

The State of Utah is not immune to this problem. While no official statistics have been compiled to indicate the full impact of the problem in Utah, it is clear that Utah has problems as well. The information that has been gathered demonstrates problems that range from threats to homicide.

Activity

Take a few moments as a class to review some of the examples cited under item #3 in this workbook. These are actual incidents, and serve as examples of the variety of problems Utah also experiences with violent behavior in the workplace.

Discussion ideas:

1. How prevalent do you think workplace violence is in Utah?
2. Is it a problem that we should be concerned about?
3. What might have been done to prevent violence from erupting in the examples you discussed?
4. List instances in which violence can occur in your work place?
5. What are some practical things you can implement in your own workplace to reduce the likelihood of violence?
6. What issues are important to you in this training?

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15 Contributing factors Workplace factors

The nature of the workplace can escalate the likelihood of violence. Consider the following:

RIFS (Reductions in Force). According to Joseph E. Kinney of the National Safe Workplace Institute, “Reducing the number of employees by [RIFs] is not a new phenomenon. What is new and different is the inability of workers to replace their wages when they lose their jobs.” Kinney says that 9 out of 10 Americans who lose their job can expect severe difficulty in finding comparable employment.

While government jobs are generally more stable, government workers deal with an increasing number of displaced workers from the private sector. This increases the potential of violence as frustrated people look to government services for assistance.

Management insensitivity. Workers today want more input and feedback in their jobs. When managers are impersonal or dictatorial, workers who seek participation become frustrated and feel alienated from the organization.

Fear is the main source of superstition, and one of the main sources of cruelty. To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom. – Bertrand Russell, Earl Russell

Application:

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16 Workplace factors - continued

*I tell you there is such
a thing as creative
hate! – Willa Cather*



Failure to exercise corrective action or disciplinary procedures. Because of the constitutional right to due process, Utah has very formal disciplinary procedures to protect the rights of its tenured employees. However, many managers seem reluctant to use the process. This may result in unsatisfactory employee performance that may last for years. If the employee is ultimately disciplined, his/her level of hostility may be much greater. He or she won't understand being terminated after working the same way for years.

External Factors. Competition in the private sector drives the level of service up. This is evidenced in the increase of delivery options for purchases, greeters at the door, more liberal return policies and sophisticated information systems.

If the higher expectations of service are not met, customer frustration may quickly turn to anger. From a customer service perspective, those who greet the public routinely in government service (receptionists, clerks, etc.) may be at a greater risk of encountering a violent customer.

In addition to the private sector pressures, government agencies face issues such as reduced funding, new laws, changing policies and other demands which place more pressure on employees to do more with less. Such stressors contribute to feelings of frustration and anger among employees.

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17 Domestic violence and other factors

Domestic disputes are increasingly becoming a factor in workplace violence because the partner is easy to find at work..

Domestic disputes are also a factor in workplace violence incidents. An angry spouse or significant other may come to the workplace because his/her partner is easy to find there. Such violent incidents often involve other innocent victims as well.

A unique phenomenon found in today's workforce is the growing number of workers who, for a variety of reasons, tend to define who they are by their jobs. This may pose some unique challenges when conducting performance appraisals. Employees may feel fearful and defensive. Since these appraisals are mostly subjective, the employee may view the appraisal as a personal judgment and thus feel resentful.

In addition, employees who are ultimately fired may seek revenge upon those who terminated them. Some employees return after months or years to seek revenge (see case studies at the beginning of this workbook).

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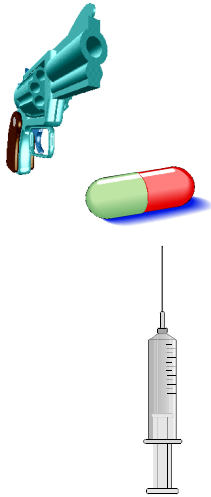
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Societal factors

Much of what people see in the media today is violent in nature. The underlying message seems to imply approval of violence in our society – that it’s “just a part of life.” U.S. crime statistics suggest that the American society has become one of the most violent societies in the world.



Weapons are more readily available. Gangs now employ sophisticated weaponry as a form of intimidation and power. Forms of violence are used for entertainment (e.g. movies, video games, some forms of pornography, etc.) *In addition, drugs and alcohol are often found to be factors in violent situations.*



Economic factors also have increased the feelings of stress in our society. Re-entry into the workplace is more difficult. Personal debt is increasing. The resulting feelings of desperation can lead to violence.

As violent acts become commonplace, society becomes desensitized to the violence. Violence becomes acceptable. The consequences impact everyone. It thus becomes the responsibility of every worker to help prevent violence in the workplace where possible. Tolerance of violence leads to an increase of violence.

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UNDERSTANDING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

19 Are some employees at greater risk than others?

The NIOSH facts sheet quoted earlier contains information about what factors place workers at risk for violence. It says:

“Factors that place workers at risk for violence in the workplace include interacting with the public, exchanging money, delivering services or goods, working late at night or during early morning hours, working alone, guarding valuable goods or property and dealing with violent people or volatile situations.

*Men are never so likely
to settle a question
rightly as when they
discuss it freely.*
– Thomas Babington,
Lord Macaulay

“Anyone can become the victim of a workplace assault, but the risks are much greater in certain industries and occupations. The taxicab industry has the highest risk [for homicide] at...nearly 60 times the national average rate..., followed by the liquor stores, detective/protective services, gas service stations and jewelry stores.

“The majority of nonfatal assaults occurred in the service (64%) and trade (21%) industries. Specifically, 27% occurred in nursing homes, 13% in social services, 11% in hospitals, 6% in grocery stores and another 5% occurred in eating and drinking places.”

Those with the most frequent interaction with the public are those who experience the highest incidence of workplace violence. Remember that it can happen anywhere, in any workplace, at any time. Educating yourself and becoming proactive are keys to success in dealing with workplace violence.

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COMPONENTS OF VIOLENCE

20

Common traits of the perpetrator

Many experts agree that certain traits are commonly found among those who become violent in the workplace. Please note that these are general signs, and that all or none of these may be indicators of violence in a particular individual. These are the *most common* traits:

Just looking at this material once will not help you contribute to violence prevention very much. It is important to stay current and be informed. Such training may be your protection.

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| ? | Easily frustrated | ? | Anti-social behavior |
| ? | Frequent job-hopping | ? | Very defensive |
| ? | Has low self-esteem | ? | History of violence |
| ? | Abusive to animals | ? | Lacks self control |
| ? | Caucasian in 30s or 40s | ? | Lacks empathy |
| ? | Owns/has access to weapons | ? | History of family problems |
| ? | History of substance abuse | ? | Suspicious of others |
| ? | Not adaptable | ? | Holds grudges |
| ? | Consistently avoids blame | ? | Speaks openly of revenge |

The list above suggests many of the common traits of those who perpetrate workplace violence. Later we will discuss the warning signs that almost always precede violent acts.

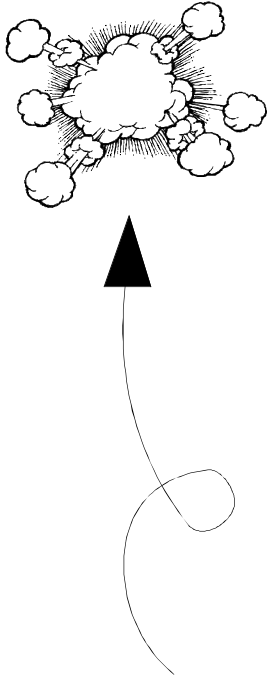
Application:

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21

Pattern of escalation

Before we attempt to identify ways to predict possible violent episodes, it would be helpful to understand how violence escalates. Because situations vary, it is difficult to establish a specific pattern of escalation that applies to every person. The sequence below demonstrates a common pattern of escalation:



1. Some sort of trauma is suffered. This may be:
 - a. A single traumatic event.
 - b. The cumulative effects of multiple minor events.
2. Belief that the problems are unsolvable.
3. Blame is placed on the situation, rather than taking personal responsibility.
4. Increased social withdrawal. Attention becomes focused on self and the situation. Possible drug or alcohol abuse.
5. The whole focus becomes self-preservation and protection.
6. Belief that a violent act is the only way out of the problem. *"They have to pay. It's only fair after what they did to me!"*
7. The violent act is attempted or committed.

Application:

Notes:

22 Catalysts for escalation

Before we look at warning signs in the next section, it may be helpful to understand some of the common factors that can aggravate or “trigger” violent behavior. While violent behavior is not always a result of these factors, caution is warranted when these factors are observed. *Note that many of these are deeply personal, and may be difficult to address without violating EEOC or ADA guidelines.* Consultation with your manager and your HR department may help you appropriately cope with these issues.

A person who is emotionally upset at work is 2 ½ times more likely to commit violence if he or she uses drugs or alcohol.

The employee-client:

- ? Is abusing alcohol or drugs
- ? Was involved in a reduction in force
- ? Has suffered family trauma, e.g. death, divorce
- ? Was demoted, lost benefits or pay, feels unimportant
- ? Has suffered a financial loss
- ? Has an unresolved grievance (perceives it is being ignored)
- ? Is having marital or other domestic/family problems
- ? Feels alienated by an insensitive supervisor or manager (or other “power figure” in their life).
- ? Expresses that his/her work is unappreciated
- ? Is suffering from mental illness
- ? Has been diagnosed with a terminal disease

Notes:

23

Recognizing potential problems (warning signs)

As we begin to look at warning signs, you must understand that the behaviors cited are not necessarily indicators of violence by themselves (with the exception of a history of violence). The key to understanding the potential for violence in these behaviors is a ***noted or perceived change in behavior.***

Some warning signs include unwarranted anger, feeling victimized, intoxication and inability to take criticism.

Some acts of violence are not foreseeable or fully preventable. Many are preventable, however. As you observe an increasing number of the warning signs in a co-worker, it should signal a need for greater caution, vigilance and intervention. It is not necessary to judge or psychoanalyze the motives of your co-workers or customers. *Just observe, and write down what you observe.*

**Application:**

Notes:

24

Warning signs

As we begin looking at warning signs, you must understand that *the best predictor of violent behavior is a history of violence (including domestic abuse.)* If you observe an increasing number of these signs in a co-worker or a client, the problem must be addressed immediately. If not, the likelihood increases that the behavior will escalate to a violent incident.

The potential for violence increases as the number of these signs increases in a co-worker.

These are some of the most common warning signs:

Unacceptable behavior in the workplace includes intimidation through threats, throwing objects, physically touching another employee (hitting, slapping, etc.) and physically threatening others.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ? Direct threats | ? Veiled threats |
| ? Frequent absenteeism | ? Chemical/alcohol abuse |
| ? Inconsistent work | ? Serious family problems |
| ? Obsession with job | ? Serious financial problems |
| ? Making serious threats | ? Angry outbursts, expressions |
| ? Concentration problems | ? Obsession w/ violence |
| ? Intimidation of others | ? Extreme withdrawal |
| ? Blaming others consistently | ? Increased personal stress |
| ? Romantic obsession/stalking | ? Reckless/increased accidents |
| ? Paranoia | ? Increase of above behaviors |

Application:

Notes:

25

More warning signs

Individual “quirky” behavior that matches the warning signs listed does not necessarily signal a problem. The key is observing *relevant* changes in behavior. The change signals a potential problem.

Further behaviors to watch for:

Signs of diminished performance include attendance problems, inconsistent work, increased accidents, and changes in health and hygiene.

Boundary crossing. This includes pushing the limits of acceptable workplace behavior and continual testing of established rules.

Inconsistent work patterns and attendance problems. This is very common with alcohol and drug abuse. It includes periods of very high and very low productivity as well as unexplained or improbable excuses for absences.

Personality disorders. This may result in antisocial behavior. Often these individuals have little or no remorse over violent behavior. They will seek to justify it. They are often manipulative, argumentative, preoccupied with themselves, and exhibit dramatic mood swings. Their behavior is volatile.

Pathological blamers. Can’t or won’t take responsibility for their own behavior. Sometimes paranoid - feel “set up.” May say things like, “They’re out to get me.” Often won’t admit any wrong at all - even in minor incidents. Blame others, the organization, society - everything but themselves.

Application:

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26 Common mistakes

Tolerance of violent behavior only leads to increased violence.
Some common mistakes that employees make are:

**If only
I had
said
something
sooner!**

1. Ignoring aggressive behavior
2. Not wanting to become involved
3. Covering up the behavior to protect a friend
4. Failure to report aggressive behavior to management
5. Consistently trying to deal with it alone

ACTIVITY

Earlier in item #6 you were asked to think about any incidents of violence you have observed. In the space below, list all of the warning signs you can remember that preceded the act(s).

If you have never witnessed a violent act in the workplace, take a moment now to review the warning signs. Increasing your awareness is a key to prevention of violence.

Application:

Notes:

WHAT CAN
I DO
ABOUT IT?

27

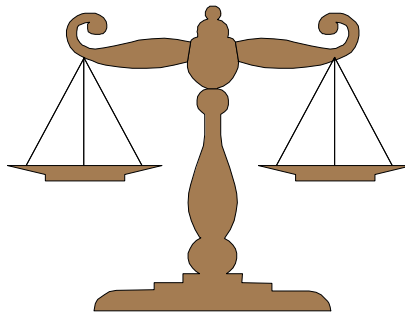
You are an essential part of the solution

Perhaps the first question to explore is “Why should I do something about it?” Some problems in society seem so big that the average person feels helpless to do anything that would make a difference.

Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not; it is the first lesson that ought to be learned, and however early a man's training begins, it is probably the last lesson that he learns thoroughly. -- Thomas Henry Huxley

Workplace violence certainly occurs at the hands of strangers in many cases. However, many of the problems can be reduced or prevented through the observation and timely action of one person. By calling at-risk behavior to the attention of a supervisor right away, many problems can be dealt with before they escalate to violence.

You may feel you have enough to do without adding this to your life. Perhaps you don't want to get involved. For 18,000 employees across the country *every week*, they become involved whether they want to or not – *as victims*. **You can help prevent it.**



Application:

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28

When and how to respond

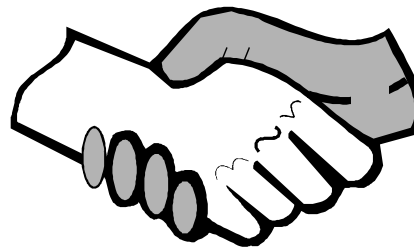
Over the next few pages, we will discuss when and how to respond to acts of violence. We will begin with daily routines, and finish with dangerous situations. After that, you will learn some simple preventive measures that can help reduce your risk.

Daily Activity

*Nothing astonishes men
so much as common
sense and plain
dealing. – Emerson*

One of the best tools for avoiding incidents of workplace violence is the thoughtful manner of dealing with people. Never strip someone of his/her dignity. Handle problems fairly, responsibly and in a manner that is consistent with your agency's policies.

Often intervention isn't necessary. If you notice a co-worker who is frustrated or upset, simply asking if they are okay and offering a listening ear can be enough to defuse the situation. Genuine interest in those with whom you work promotes good morale in your workplace.

**Application:**

Notes:

29

When and how to respond - continued

If simply talking things out with your co-worker doesn't help, further intervention may be necessary.

*Every heart that has
beat strong and
cheerfully has left a
hopeful impulse behind
it in the world, and
bettered the tradition of
mankind. – Robert
Louis Stevenson*

Be observant. This does not in any way suggest “spying” on other employees. Just care enough to notice what is happening around you.

When you observe the early warning signs in a co-worker, call it to the attention of your supervisor immediately. Even if you think the problem will just work itself out, mention what you observed to your supervisor.

Prompt intervention is critical. Ignoring the behavior allows it to escalate. Caring enough about your co-workers to help them will prevent many problems from escalating to serious crimes.

Document what you see. You don't need to worry about analyzing behavior. Just write down what happens.

Application:

Notes:

30

Facing aggression

Study these guidelines periodically so that you will remember them in a threatening situation. When faced with an angry customer, client, or co-worker:

Try to stay calm. Raising your voice may increase the anxiety of the potentially violent person.

Speak slowly, softly, clearly.



Try to understand. Ask questions like, “Help me understand why you are upset,” or “Help me understand what you would like me to do.” Once you think you understand, repeat it back to the person so they know you understand. Often angry people simply want to be heard and understood. They need a sympathetic ear from someone they can trust.

Avoid challenging body language such as staring or glaring, hands on hips, moving toward the person, etc. If you are sitting, remain seated, and don’t turn your back to the person.

Summon help. Remain helpful while summoning your supervisor. Sometimes irate people are calmed quickly when they have a chance to “talk to the boss.”

Application:

Notes:

31

In the face of danger

If you are confronted by someone who either threatens you or has caused harm to someone already, immediate action is required. In addition to the items on the previous page, keep the following things in mind:



If you feel you are in danger and have the option of doing so, escape. Get away as quickly as possible. When escape is not possible, hide and/or take cover to avoid injury. *Don't try to be a hero.* Get help as soon as possible. (If you don't know how to summon help in your agency, ask your supervisor immediately. Agencies must provide a means for employees to communicate problems.)

Do not threaten or retaliate in kind.

Move away from any objects, such as scissors or heavy objects that may be employed as a weapon. (If possible, keep these off of your desk.)

Position yourself, if possible, so that you can exit readily.

Don't agree or disagree with distorted statements. Remain calm. Avoid defensiveness. Don't try to place blame back on the angry person.

Never challenge them, try to bargain, or make promises you can't keep.

Application:

Notes:

32

In the face of danger - continued

Take all threats of violence seriously.

Be clear with your communication - that what they have done is inappropriate. Clearly communicate your intentions (like calling security or 911). Follow through - make the call. Do what you say you will do.

If it can be done safely, ask all uninvolved people in the area to leave immediately. A prearranged code word or phrase could be used to alert your co-workers to call police.

Describe the consequences of any violent behavior to the individual.

Do not physically touch an irate person or try to force them to leave.

If the person is brandishing a weapon, calmly ask them to place the weapon in a neutral position (not pointed at anyone) while you continue to talk with them.

Don't try to disarm them. Leave this for security/police.

Threats that suggest or refer to the possibility of a physical attack must be taken seriously, as they may precede acts of violence.

Application:

Notes:

33

After the incident

Often what follows an incident of violence is shock, chaos and uncertainty. Those involved and those who witnessed the incident feel violated and fearful. It is difficult to think clearly under such circumstances.

GET HELP

If help hasn't yet been summoned, do so immediately. Then, look to the people involved. Take care of any injuries that are serious or life-threatening. As soon after the incident as you are able (immediately is preferable), take time to document everything you can. Write down as much of the following as you can remember:

WRITE IT DOWN

Write down perpetrator information, including name, physical description of the perpetrator, what was said, what the perpetrator did, etc. Write down everything you can remember. Try to write without being judgmental. In other words, don't write "He was crazy," or "He acted irrationally." Try to accurately record what the person said and did.

LIST THE DETAILS

List all of the people who were involved in any way (especially those who witnessed the incident).

Document as much detail as possible. This becomes very important for the investigation of the incident.

When and as needed, take care of yourself. Seek appropriate counseling, medical attention or other assistance to help you through what you experienced. Carrying unresolved feelings about the incident will only harm you. Find a way to bring closure to the incident.

Application:

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PREVENTION STRATEGIES FOR EMPLOYEES

34

Prevention

In partnership with your agency and your co-workers, much can be done to help prevent violence where you work. The following list is not all-inclusive, yet offers helpful guidelines to consider:

It is each employee's responsibility to keep the work environment safe. **ZERO TOLERANCE** for any form of workplace violence is the only acceptable standard for safety.

Maintain open communication with all employees. Create a positive working environment based upon respect and trust.

Lock doors that lead to non-public work areas.

Work areas should be designed to allow more than one exit/entrance where possible.

Establish a code word, phrase, or signal that can be used to alert others to call police/security for help.

Be actively involved in your workplace safety. Attend training, participate in focus groups, help to assess risks and actively observe what is happening around you. Give feedback to your supervisor.



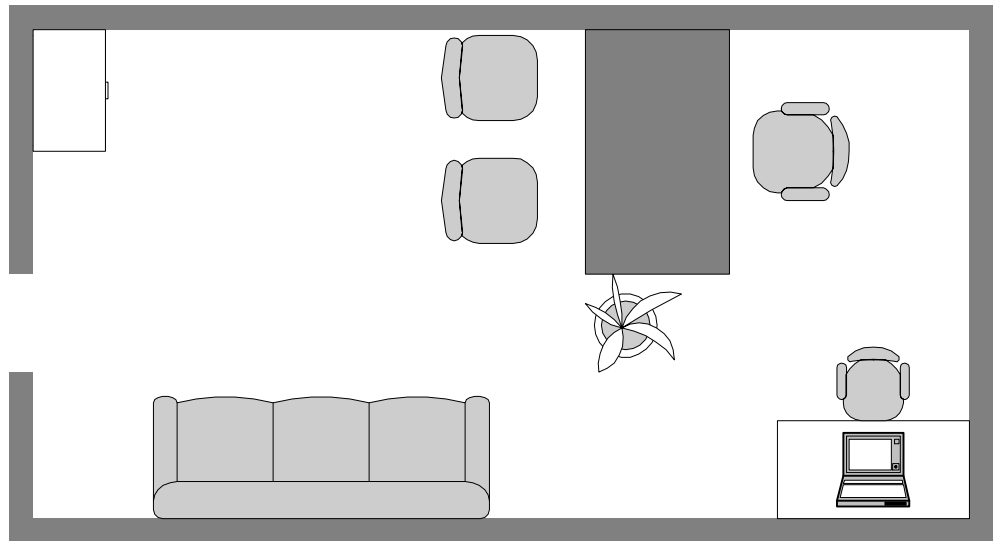
Application:

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35 Office layout

The sample office below may not look just like your office space or cubicle, but it will serve as an example of layout. Notice that the person who sits at the desk would be literally trapped if an angry person came into the office. No escape route is available except *through* the person who came in. This could be very dangerous.

The only acceptable policy is a zero-tolerance policy. Any tolerance of violence in the workplace will allow escalation of the problem.



How could you rearrange your work space (if needed) to allow for quick exit if it became necessary?

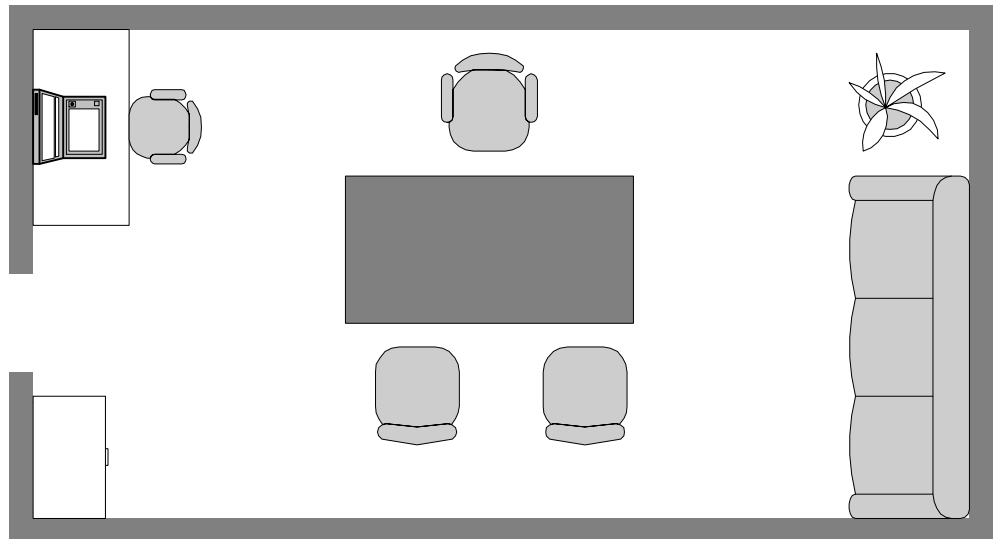
Application:

Notes:

36 Office layout - another view

The office still has only one entrance/exit. If the person remains there, no advantage is gained by the rearrangement. However, if the person enters the room, a quick exit is then more possible with this arrangement.

*Every heart that has
beat strong and
cheerfully has left a
hopeful impulse behind
it in the world, and
bettered the tradition of
mankind. – Robert
Louis Stevenson*



Take another look at your work space. If your layout is a potential risk, check to see if another layout is possible. If changing your office layout is difficult or impossible, try to at least meet in another room where you have exit options. Your safety is very important.

Application:

Notes:

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APPENDICES

Appendix - 1

EMPLOYMENT REFERENCE CHECK

Date: _____

Position: _____

Division: _____

Applicants Name: _____

Phone: () _____

Reference Contacted: _____

Position: _____

Company: _____

Title / Duties Verified: Yes or No? _____

1. How would you describe his/her performance (i.e., quality & quantity)? _____

2. What were his/her greatest strengths? _____

3. Were there any areas they need to improve in? _____

4. What was his/her reason for leaving? _____

5. Was the employee dependable as far as attendance is concerned?
() Yes () No Explain: _____

6. How well did the employee take instructions and direction? _____

7. Was the employee flexible in adapting to new assignments, or resistant to change? _____

8. How well did she/he work with other people? _____

9. Are you aware of any incidents of threats, intimidation or violence involving this person? _____

10. Did she/he work in customer service or perform public contact work for you? Did she/he deal with irate customers? How effective was she/he in these duties? _____

11. Did the employee write letters for you? Was she/he able to compose letters from general directions? Was grammar acceptable? _____

12. Did his/her job require report writing? If so, were reports timely and accurate? Was writing clear and easily understood by others? _____

13. Would you rehire him/her? () Yes () No Explain _____

Comments: _____

Appendix - 2

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE CHECKLIST

This checklist was developed by OSHA (publication 3148), and helps to identify present or potential workplace violence problems. Employers also may be aware of other serious hazards not listed here.

Designated competent and responsible observers can readily make periodic inspections to identify and evaluate workplace security hazards and threats of workplace violence. These inspections should be scheduled on a *regular* basis when new, previously unidentified security hazards are recognized when occupational deaths injuries, or threats of injury occur; when a safety, health and security program is established and whenever workplace security conditions warrant an inspection.

Periodic inspections for security hazards include identifying and evaluating potential workplace security hazards and changes in employee work practices which may lead to compromising security. Please use the following checklist to identify and evaluate workplace security hazards. **TRUE notations indicate a potential risk for serious security hazards:**

- ☐T ☐F This industry frequently confronts violent behavior and assaults of staff.
- ☐T ☐F Violence occurs regularly where this facility is located.
- ☐T ☐F Violence has occurred on the premises or in conducting business.
- ☐T ☐F Customers, clients or coworkers assault, threaten, yell, push or verbally abuse employees or use racial or sexual remarks.
- ☐T ☐F Employees are NOT required to report incidents or threats of violence, regardless of injury or severity, to employer.
- ☐T ☐F Employees have NOT been trained by the employer to recognize and handle threatening, aggressive or violent behavior.
- ☐T ☐F Violence is accepted as "part of the job" by some managers, supervisors and/or employees.
- ☐T ☐F Access and freedom of movement within the workplace are NOT restricted to those persons who have a legitimate reason for being there.
- ☐T ☐F The workplace security system is inadequate - i.e., door locks malfunction, windows are not secure and there are no physical barriers or containment systems.
- ☐T ☐F Employees or staff members have been assaulted, threatened or verbally abused by clients and patients.
- ☐T ☐F Medical and counseling services have NOT been offered to employees who have been assaulted.
- ☐T ☐F Alarm systems such as panic alarm buttons, silent alarms or personal electronic alarm systems are NOT being used for prompt security assistance.
- ☐T ☐F There is no regular training provided on correct response to alarm sounding.
- ☐T ☐F Alarm systems are NOT tested on a monthly basis to assure correct function.
- ☐T ☐F Security guards are NOT employed at the workplace.
- ☐T ☐F Closed circuit cameras and mirrors are NOT used to monitor dangerous areas.
- ☐T ☐F Metal detectors are NOT available or NOT used in this facility.
- ☐T ☐F Employees have NOT been trained to recognize and control hostile and escalating aggressive behaviors or to manage assaultive behavior.
- ☐T ☐F Employees CANNOT adjust work schedules to use the 'Buddy system' for visits to clients in areas where they feel threatened.
- ☐T ☐F Cellular phones or other communication devices are NOT made available to field staff to enable them to request aid.
- ☐T ☐F Vehicles are NOT maintained on a regular basis to ensure reliability and safety.
- ☐T ☐F Employees work where assistance is NOT quickly available.

Appendix - 3

SAMPLE POLICY 1

1. All forms of violence and/or threats of violence are prohibited.
2. Complaint procedure:
 - A. Whenever acts or threats of violence are experienced or observed, a complaint should be made to the employee's immediate supervisor. The supervisor should investigate the complaint and take action necessary to eliminate and prevent violence and threats of violence. An employee who is guilty of threatening or committing an act of violence may be disciplined in accordance with current rules on disciplinary action. If necessary, the agency Safety Director and/or the Human Resource director should be contacted for assistance in resolving the incident.
 - B. At the option of the employee, complaints may also be made to the employee's second level supervisor, the Associate or Deputy Superintendent (or Director), the Executive Director or the Human Resource Section.

SAMPLE POLICY 2

**STATE OF UTAH SECURITY AND WORKPLACE
VIOLENCE PREVENTION POLICIES AND
PROCEDURES**

The State of Utah Department of _____ adopts these policies and procedures in an effort to provide a safe and secure working place for both staff and clients. It is recognized that workplace violence and crime in any of their forms can invade a workplace. It is also recognized that both violence and crime have negative effects on the ability of all staff to perform their work duties and present a threat to the operations of state government.

Policy - Zero Tolerance of Workplace Violence

It is the policy of _____ that workplace violence in any form will not be tolerated in any of the activities or offices of the State of Utah and individuals engaging in workplace violence will be disciplined and/or criminally prosecuted.

Procedures

1. Workplace violence definition:
"Workplace violence is defined as any behavior, action or statement made by an individual or group directed toward another individual, or group, and done with the purpose of threatening, intimidating or otherwise causing any reasonable individual(s) who is the recipient of the behavior, action or statement to fear for his or her safety."
 - a. Workplace violence may be in the form of, but not limited to, verbal comments, threats, innuendo, intimidating behavior, shouting, stalking and/or physical violence.
2. Any employee engaging in any form of workplace violence is subject to administrative disciplinary action and/or having a criminal complaint filed against him or her.
3. Any visitor(s) or agency client(s) engaging in any form of workplace violence, in the department offices or in any agency-based activity, will be asked to leave the office, escorted from the office, denied access to the office or activity and/or, based on the severity of the behavior, may have criminal charges filed against him or her.
4.
 - a. The reporting employee may be required to provide a written report of the incident
 - b. The incident shall be investigated and, if verified, actions shall be taken to correct the situation. On the basis of the facts, a plan for the protection of the employee shall be developed and implemented.

Appendix 4, continued

5. Any employee who believes that he or she may be the subject of any form of workplace violence shall immediately notify his or her supervisor in writing of this occurrence or the reason for his/her concern.
 - a. The member shall provide in writing all necessary detail of any incident(s) or detail explaining why he/she believes that he/she may be the victim of an incident of workplace violence.
 - b. The allegations shall be investigated and, if verified, actions shall be taken by the agency to provide support and protection for the employee.
6. Any employee who has obtained any type of court issued protective order against any individual(s) shall report this fact to his or her supervisor and, where feasible, shall provide a copy of the order.
 - a. The supervisor shall work with the employee, agency security or the police and other appropriate individuals to develop a plan to address the safety of the employee and the security of the facility.
7. Any visitor to the agency office or any agency client who believes that he or she has been subjected to any form of violence from any staff member shall report the incident to _____ who shall conduct an investigation of the incident and act in accordance with this policy.

***Note: This is a sample policy only. Any policy on Workplace Violence Prevention should be developed and implemented with the assistance of the agency's Human Resource Department and legal counsel.**

Appendix 4 - continued

Policy - _____ Office Security

Every agency of state government should adopt specific rules to address the unique needs and situations of each work place. Management may wish to consider the following factors in determining what agency specific policies and procedures it will adopt:

1. What services does the agency provide? Do these services involve confrontational situations or simply the provision of information or services?
2. How much face to face contact does staff have with clients?
3. What is the current physical arrangement of the office.
4. What is the physical layout of the office? Are isolation areas readily available in the public areas of the office?
5. Are public areas clearly separate from private areas or is the office designed so that private and public areas are mixed
6. Does staff have private offices, cubicles or do they work in an open spaces?
7. What is the office location, agency history of crime and/or history of workplace violence.
8. Who provides security and/or police service for the office?

Once these and other related questions have been answered then agency specific procedures can be developed. These procedures need to address agency specific problems or unique situations.

The following may serve as **a sample** for the types of policies that can be developed for each unit in order to fulfill this requirements.

It is the Policy of the _____ that in order to provide for the security of the staff in the office the following rules will be enforced:

Procedures:

1. The main door to the office shall be unlocked at 8 (eight) AM and locked at 5 (five) PM. Staff arriving before 8 (eight) AM must use their agency issued keys to enter the office. The office door shall be locked at 5 (five) PM. Staff leaving the facility after 5 PM are responsible for seeing that all doors and windows are securely closed and locked.
2. All visitors to the agency entering the facility shall be required to wait in the reception area until the employee they came to see escorts them to the location of the meeting. Following the meeting the agency employee shall escort the visitor back to the reception area. Staff members are encouraged to utilize the two conference rooms in the office or any vacant private office rather than using their own cubicles for meetings.

Appendix 4 - continued

3. All visitors to the agency shall sign in with the receptionist and shall be issued a numbered visitor's badge that shall be worn at all times while the visitor is in the agency.
4. Employees are required to place all confidential files or other information in locked files at the close of business each day.
5. Any staff member leaving the office for a period of time of more than _____ minutes shall sign out at the front desk listing his or her destination and approximate time of return. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action being taken against him/her.
6. If the receptionist or other staff member has cause to believe that the visitor may pose a threat to staff, the visitor shall be escorted to the main conference room and asked to remain there until the individual that he or she came to see is available to meet with them. The staff member shall meet with the individual in the conference room. The staff member is encouraged to have an additional staff member present in the room. The receptionist shall provide to the staff member the emergency notification button that can be activated if a problem occurs.
7. If the emergency system is activated, staff are to vacate the office by the closest exit available. Staff are to assemble at the top of the stairs leading to the north east parking lot. The receptionist, or individual performing that duty, is to take the signout sheet for the office in order to determine who is still in the office.
8. In the case of any emergency, staff shall fully cooperate with the security/police or other law enforcement personnel.
9. If any staff member has cause to believe that a potentially violent individual may be coming to the office, that staff member shall immediately notify his/her supervisor. The supervisor shall then take appropriate actions to notify the receptionist and/or other appropriate individuals including but not limited to Capitol Police, the office security team, etc.
10. If it is necessary to silently alert staff that it should vacate the office or that a problem exists, the receptionist shall be notified through the use of a code word that a problem exists and that staff should vacate the office. The receptionist shall then notify the staff to quietly leave the office and to assemble in the designated assembly area.
11. Division management shall arrange for periodic training of all staff in security and workplace violence avoidance policies and procedures. Any new staff shall be oriented to the policies and procedures within the first week of work.

Any staff member working at the office during the weekend or at other times when the office is closed shall notify facility security that he or she is in the office. The employee shall notify security when he or she leaves the facility.

Appendix 4 - continued

The following are additional issues that should be discussed in policy and procedure at some point in the process:

1. Firearms and other weapons in the workplace - what, if any, restrictions should be in place.
2. Property protections and security - rules for locking up computers and other equipment.
3. Searches of desks, flipper drawers, etc. (If it is the intent to allow these to be searched, it should be adopted in policy and all staff notified that they have no expectation of privacy.)

***Note: This is a sample policy only. Any policy on Workplace Violence Prevention should be developed and implemented with the assistance of the agency's Human Resource Department and legal counsel.**